



**STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

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Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building – 1111 Washington Street SE – Olympia, WA

**MITIGATED DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE (MDNS)**

**Name of Proposal:** MDNS 14-089: INDIAN CREEK FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION

**Description of Proposal:**

The Indian Creek watershed has been degraded from past land use including construction and management of a logging railroad in the 1920's, livestock grazing, farming, and tractor logging. The stream and associated meadows have lost the large trees and riparian shrubs that would provide roughness features during floods. As a result, the stream channel has cut deeper into the valley alluvium and high flows are now trapped in the incised, flume-like channel. This project proposes to selectively harvest suppressed sub-dominant trees from near-by uplands as a source for some of the restoration material (Figure 2). Additional logs will be imported for restoration material.

Improving groundwater storage in lower Indian Creek will contribute to a more normative flow regime in the mainstem Teanaway, will improve minimum stream flows, help moderate flood peaks, restore the density and species composition of riparian vegetation, increase pool habitat and cool water refugia during periods of high temperature, provide suitable habitat for beaver colonization, help stabilize channel and bank erosion, build up and reconnect the floodplain, increase water storage capacity across the floodplain, filter and store sediment inputs, and provide some overhead cover and shading on the stream.

Approximately 250 trees total will be harvested and 75 or fewer will include rootwads. The harvest of the trees will occur on approximately 70 acres of mature forest meeting nesting foraging habitat criterion for Northern Spotted Owls. The average DBH of trees selected for removal will be approximately 15" up to 24" DBH. Tree selection will be approved by a WDNR Forester to ensure that no gaps will be created, and that canopy closure will continue to exceed 60% after harvest is complete. Tree density will be maintained that is greater than 115 trees per acre (greater than 4 inches DBH), with dominant tree heights greater than 85 feet tall to maintain nesting roosting foraging habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl. The harvest will be completed with rubber tire skidders, and/or cable systems. In addition, approximately 750 logs of various sizes will be transported to the Indian watershed by Yakama Nation. This supplemental material is required in order to achieve desired floodplain and in channel roughness objectives; supplemental material cannot be harvested locally due to harvest restrictions related to northern spotted owls. During floods the wood distributed on the 1.3 miles of denuded floodplain provides the roughness that would normally be provided by riparian vegetation. The roughness slows the floodwater, which allows for fine sediment deposition that native seedlings later germinate upon.

The proponent will use existing roads; no new roads will be constructed. An abandoned road will be temporarily re-opened to access the project. It will be abandoned at the completion of the project.

Trees will be placed in complex jams at 25 locations within the project stream reach and each jam will consist of approximately 40 logs, 8 of which will contain rootwads for stability during high water, and to promote greater complexity. Driven or pushed untreated pile may be used within the streambed and floodplain to provide additional stability to the trees. Pile will only be driven or pushed and excavation will not be used for placement to minimize disturbance. The 200 logs (not more than 75 with rootwads) will also be scattered randomly on the meadow to restore floodplain roughness to dissipate flood energy. Ditches that route surface water to the stream will also be filled with woody material to retard surface runoff to the stream, thereby reducing flood peaks and erosion and promote groundwater infiltration. Placing complex log jams in the stream is expected to cause the channel to attain a more natural configuration. This technique is referred to as large wood replenishment, and is described in WDFW's "Stream Habitat Restoration Guidelines" Manual.

**The proponent shall incorporate the following mitigation measures into the project:**

**Wolves**

- The project will occur in early fall and will be completed in less than one month.
- The project will increase the amount of riparian habitat, improving wolf prey species.
- A wolf management plan will be developed and approved by USFWS to ensure there are no adverse impacts to wolf den sites and/or pups.

**Northern Spotted Owls**

- Canopy closure will be retained at levels above 60%.
- No trees with defect will be removed.
- Harvest will be extremely light, removing only a few select individual understory trees. Dominant and co-dominant trees will be retained.
- Equipment routes will be flagged by WDFW biologists to protect sensitive riparian vegetation and upland habitats. Northern spotted owls nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat will be maintained throughout the thinning activities. This project will occur outside of the Northern Spotted Owl nesting seasons.

**Northern Goshawks**

- Timing restrictions will be adhered to. This project will occur outside of the Northern Goshawk nesting seasons (Northern Goshawk timing restrictions = 0.7 mile radius from the nest site detected near the proposal during nesting season).

**Bull Trout**

- Indian Creek will be surveyed prior to construction to ensure that bull trout redds are not present.

**Mid Columbia Steelhead**

- Work window limitations will be adhered to.

## Water quality

- Appropriate water quality best management practices will be implemented at the project site during harvest and wood placement.
- Any discharge from cleaning equipment or reducing/controlling upland erosion will not be discharged to surface waters. Equipment will be staged in upland areas that do not slope toward surface waters and at least 150 feet away from the OHWM.
- Trees, piles, or large wood will all be placed using full suspension (no dragging or plowing of wood within the streambed or banks) or by hand using hand-held equipment.
- Spinning and turning of equipment near the stream will be avoided when placing trees/wood/pile.
- Equipment placing wood/trees in the stream will be positioned and operating on firm or frozen soils out of muddy/wet or wetland areas.
- Exposed soils with delivery potential will be covered with slash/mulch to provide short-term erosion control and will be seeded with natural grass mixes to provide long-term erosion control.
- Any holes from upland areas associated with tree and rootwad removal will be backfilled with earth and “heeled in”, compacted, and covered with a mulch as necessary to preclude deliverability top any surface water.

## Plants

- Exposed soils within skid routes will be mulched then reseeded in late winter or early spring and monitored periodically to ensure an 80% survival rate.
- WDFW, in coordination with WDNR will restore any disturbed ground with native seed/plants appropriate for the area. The old road that will be used for temporary access will be abandoned and seeded

## Public Access and Recreation

- The area is open to pedestrian, bicycle and horse access. These methods for accessing the property will be retained. The existing open road will not be affected by this project.

## Historic and Cultural Preservation

- A Cultural and Archaeological survey has been completed by a professional archaeologist. All National Register-eligible sites will be protected with a 10 meter buffer.

## Proponent/Applicant:

### **Primary:**

Scott Nicolai, Habitat Biologist  
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### **Secondary:**

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**Location of Proposal:** The project is in Kittitas County in central Washington State. Indian Creek is a left bank tributary to the North Fork (NF) of the Teanaway River, and the project is located within Township 21N, Range 21N, Section 16 WM.

**Lead Agency:** Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)

WDFW has determined that this proposal will likely not have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Therefore, state law<sup>1</sup> does not require an environmental impact statement (EIS). WDFW made this mitigated determination of nonsignificance (MDNS) after we reviewed the environmental checklist and other information on file with us.

We issued this MDNS according to state rules.<sup>2</sup> We will **not act on this proposal for 14 days** from the date we issued the MDNS. Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on this proposal or MDNS. We must receive your comments within 14 days of the date of this letter. The comment period will end at **5:00 pm on December 31, 2014.**

**Method of Comment:**

The following procedures shall govern the method to comment on agency SEPA proposals. Comments received through these procedures are part of the official SEPA record for this proposal.

You can submit your comments any one of the following ways:

- Email to [SEPAdesk2@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:SEPAdesk2@dfw.wa.gov)
- Online at the WDFW SEPA website comment link at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/>
- Fax to (360) 902-2946;
- Mail to the address below.

**Responsible Official:** Lisa Wood

**Position/Title:** SEPA/NEPA Coordinator, WDFW Regulatory Services Section

**Address:** 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091

After the comment period closes, applicants may view the updated status of this proposal on the WDFW SEPA website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/>. Once the status is posted as final, applicants and permittees may take action on the proposal. When a proposal is modified or withdrawn, notice will be given in accordance with state law.<sup>1</sup>

If you have questions about this MDNS or the details of the proposal, contact Lisa Wood at the address, e-mail, or fax number above; you can also call her at (360) 902-2260.

**DATE OF ISSUE:** December 17, 2014

**SIGNATURE:**



Footnotes

1. RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c)
2. WAC 197-11-340(2).

SEPA Log Number: 14-089. mdns